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IETF Guidelines for Conduct

Status of this Memo

This document specifies an Internet Best Current Practices for the Internet Community, and requests discussion and suggestions for improvements. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

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Abstract

This document provides a set of guidelines for personal interaction in the Internet Engineering Task Force. The Guidelines recognize the diversity of IETF participants, emphasize the value of mutual respect, and stress the broad applicability of our work.

1. Introduction

The work of the IETF relies on cooperation among a broad cultural diversity of peoples, ideas, and communication styles. The Guidelines for Conduct inform our interaction as we work together to develop multiple, interoperable technologies for the Internet. All IETF participants aim to abide by these Guidelines as we build consensus in person, at IETF meetings, and in e-mail. If conflicts arise, we resolve them according to the procedures outlined in BCP 25.[1]

2. Principles of Conduct

1. IETF participants extend respect and courtesy to their colleagues at all times.

   IETF participants come from diverse origins and backgrounds and are equipped with multiple capabilities and ideals. Regardless of these individual differences, participants treat their colleagues with respect as persons--especially when it is difficult to agree with them. Seeing from another’s point of view is often revealing, even when it fails to be compelling.

English is the de facto language of the IETF, but it is not the native language of many IETF participants. Native English speakers attempt to speak clearly and a bit slowly and to limit the use of slang in order to accommodate the needs of all listeners.

2. IETF participants develop and test ideas impartially, without finding fault with the colleague proposing the idea.

   We dispute ideas by using reasoned argument, rather than through intimidation or ad hominem attack. Or, said in a somewhat more IETF-like way:

   "Reduce the heat and increase the light"

3. IETF participants think globally, devising solutions that meet the needs of diverse technical and operational environments.

   The goal of the IETF is to maintain and enhance a working, viable, scalable, global Internet, and the problems we encounter are genuinely very difficult. We understand that "scaling is the ultimate problem" and that many ideas quite workable in the small fail this crucial test. IETF participants use their best engineering judgment to find the best solution for the whole Internet, not just the best solution for any particular network, technology, vendor, or user. We follow the intellectual property guidelines outlined in BCP 9.[2]

4. Individuals who attend Working Group meetings are prepared to contribute to the ongoing work of the group.

   IETF participants who attend Working Group meetings read the relevant Internet-Drafts, RFCs, and e-mail archives beforehand, in order to familiarize themselves with the technology under discussion. This may represent a challenge for newcomers, as e-mail archives can be difficult to locate and search, and it may not be easy to trace the history of longstanding Working Group debates. With that in mind, newcomers who attend Working Group meetings are encouraged to observe and absorb whatever material they can, but should not interfere with the ongoing process of the group. Working Group meetings run on a very limited time schedule, and are not intended for the education of individuals. The work of the group will continue on the mailing list, and many questions would be better expressed on the list in the months that follow.

3. Security Considerations

IETF participants review each Internet protocol for security concerns, and these concerns are incorporated in the description of each protocol.

4. Acknowledgements

Mike O'Dell wrote the first draft of the Guidelines for Conduct, and many of his thoughts, statements, and observations are included in this version. Many useful editorial comments were supplied by Dave Crocker. Members of the POISSON Working Group provided many significant additions to the text.

5. References

[1] Bradner, S., "IETF Working Group Guidelines and Procedures", BCP 25, RFC 2418, September 1998.

[2] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", BCP 9, RFC 2026, October 1996.

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